



Mike Parson - Missouri Governor
Office of Communications

2019 STATE OF THE STATE BY GOVERNOR MIKE PARSON GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

3:00 PM (CST)

Thank you. Thank you very much.

Thank you Lieutenant Governor Kehoe ...
Speaker Haahr...
President Pro-Tem Schatz...
Judges of the Missouri Supreme Court ...
Distinguished state officials...
Members of the 100th General Assembly...AND my fellow Missourians.

I am honored and proud to stand before you this afternoon as the 57th Governor of the state of Missouri.

And, one of the highest honors I have as Governor is to introduce the First Lady of the State of Missouri Teresa Parson.

I am so proud of her and the grace she brings to her position as First Lady.

And...I look forward to the days when we have more time to spend with each other...our family...and our grandchildren... But, until that time, our dedication... will be to the people of the State of Missouri.

Months ago I came into office amid rare and unique circumstances, yet the focus from day one of my administration was putting the people of Missouri first... where they belong, ahead of partisan differences or personal gain.

We traveled to every corner of this great State...we listened... we heard...and...we learned.

I stand before you today to share a vision. A vision that will chart Missouri's future into the next decade. Missouri is dear to my heart, and by working together, we can protect and build a Missouri that is successful for the next generation.

The more we listened, the more it became clear that the people of Missouri are ready for bold solutions.

Even when times are good, Missourians still face many issues and have a frustration with government that often works to protect the status quo and is unwilling to take bold steps.



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However, to move Missouri forward, we must take bold steps and tackle big issues.

I will commit to you that bold ideas and tough challenges will not be something we shy away from, but my administration is willing to work with this legislature in a disciplined and focused way... and together, we can achieve big results and lay a solid foundation for our state's future.

It's time to have an honest conversation about the challenges we face and the solutions we need.

The honest truth is that we have not been as efficient as we can be. We don't promote our state, our resources, and our people as best we should, and we have not prepared our state well enough for the future... and every Missourian deserves better.

Make no mistake about it, we have before us one of the greatest opportunities, by working together to improve Missouri and to be the BEST in the United States of America.

The longer we delay and avoid tough decisions, the bigger our problems become.

Many of us are willing to admit this, and I hope you can agree that we cannot afford to delay action any longer. I am asking for your help to move Missouri forward and deliver results... because after all ... we are the Show Me State.

What this means in practical terms is that we have to be honest about our priorities and united in our focus.

As elected officials, we are good at declaring priorities. While some of our priorities may not be the same... when we try to make EVERYTHING a priority, the fact is... nothing is truly a priority.

So let me be crystal clear, cultivating and training our workforce for high-demand jobs and investing in critical infrastructure are the priorities we must address this session.

As I have traveled the state, I know these are issues important to every single one of your districts – whether republican or democrat, urban or rural, we have good reason to work together to achieve real results for ALL Missourians.

By addressing these issues now, we will make major investments for the next generations of the state of Missouri.



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There of course will be other issues that are important, like passing tax credit reform, working to make government more efficient and more accountable, protecting freedoms and promoting a culture of life, and passing regulatory and venue reform.

ALL of which must be done.

But our focus for the state of Missouri to thrive both now and into the future are on two key priorities ... - workforce development and infrastructure.

Let me tell you a story about a young man with us today...

Troy is an eighth grader from Eldon who has experienced some hardships in his life. Troy's struggles are NOT unlike many families across Missouri.

Quaker Windows is a Missouri based company that has developed a partnership with Eldon Schools to ensure students like Troy have a mentor all throughout high school...

And, to make sure that he not only receives a quality education and training, but he is also taught valuable life skills... like, the importance of showing up on time and having a strong work ethic.

Quaker Windows and Eldon Schools have a community partnership. This example should be a model of how we approach new efforts to train the next generation of workers.

Please welcome Troy who is with us here today...

We must consider making necessary changes to our education programs and update the training pipelines to ensure economic growth in Missouri.

Our true dedication should be to build and create wealth... NOT REDISTRIBUTE IT.

For example, Missouri's high school graduation rate is higher than most states. This is something we should ALL be proud of...however, we fall behind other states when we look at post-secondary education.

We are well into the 21st century... and yes, extra levels of education are needed to meet the demands of our workforce... and these jobs are going to provide higher wages, which will benefit Missouri families.



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This is why my budget calls for a total investment of nearly \$75 million dollars into bold and innovative workforce development programs.

Consider those programs that build off the many projects we already have in place like NGA West, Boeing's TX, Nucor Steel, and many others.

When combined with our current economic development tools... ALL can be tremendously successful.

In today's world, a higher level of education should not simply mean getting college degrees. This is why I am advocating that we provide \$22 million dollars to fund a program known as Fast Track.

Fast Track will allow Missourians to receive advanced training in high-demand areas largely taught at our community colleges, technical schools, and colleges and universities. This will open the doors for Missourians to have opportunities to earn more money for their hard work.

Fast Track...will benefit tens of thousands of Missourians from every corner of the state.

But, to have a laser-like focus, we can't stop there.

We must ALSO start integrating EMPLOYER and industry-led input into the needs and demands of the workforce, like increasing Industry Recognized Credentials as part of our high school curriculum.

To further workforce development, this focus must also extend into the economic development tools we use as well.

As a result, we are going to consolidate, repurpose, and add flexibility to a series of incentives we currently offer into a more streamlined program called Missouri One Start.

That is why I am adding \$10 million dollars to the Missouri One Start program, to help place a greater emphasis on building out the workforce needs and for job creation projects, so companies who use them are forced to plant deeper roots here in Missouri and become longer and more substantial partners.

ALSO...we are providing \$16 million dollars for Missouri Excels... a program for Missouri Higher Education Institutions to develop



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and expand employer-driven education, training programs, and initiatives to increase career readiness.

Finally, when looking ahead, we know that we are up against the clock... competing with every other state across the country... but Missouri will be ready, with the right tools in the toolbox... we'll be ready to ensure our state will move forward in workforce development... and ALL Missourians will prosper!

Not only is workforce development going to be a priority... but to ensure future success, we also need to take a serious look at long term investments in Missouri's infrastructure.

When we talk about infrastructure, we can no longer just think about bricks and mortar, roads and bridges, but also the location in which people look to invest capital and operate the economy of the future.

One of those areas in Missouri is high-speed broadband access. We currently have about ten school districts and many rural communities that lack access to high speed broadband... and that is unacceptable.

Most recently, thanks to the President and our federal delegation ... Missouri secured \$255 million dollars for the expansion of broadband to connect our state.

With this exciting opportunity, it is also important we at the state provide funding to cover the gaps in delivering broadband.

That is why... my budget calls for an additional \$5 million dollars in broadband funding to close the gap that exists in federal funds, and truly give the highest impact for Missourians.

Another area of focus is to put a greater emphasis on our Missouri ports. Located in the heart of the country we are at the center of major opportunities, especially with the expansion of the Panama Canal.

Missouri's agriculture and manufacturing industries have no better route to global expansion than delivering our high quality products to the world through our waterways.

In addition to our rivers... Missouri has one of the largest highway systems in the country, and since we sit at the nexus of east and west, this system receives a great deal of strain.



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Nonetheless, we maintain this system with one of the lowest levels of funding in the country.

Over the years, we have seen proposals go before the voters and fail, but this cannot... and... does not mean we are expected to do NOTHING.

This is why I am asking you to consider an infrastructure plan. While funded through our budget savings, it will give us the ability to begin immediate work on nearly 250 bridges across the state of Missouri... all in need of critical repair or replacement.

By doing so, we will be freeing up nearly \$350 million dollars in state and federal resources... allowing us to accelerate MoDOT's current list of state infrastructure projects.

ALSO, we will be adding a \$50 million dollar cost sharing program to assist our cities and counties to help address the most serious infrastructure needs in our local areas.

In fact, this raises the challenge for each of us to find even more creative ways to locate savings to make more substantial investments in our infrastructure without a tax increase to the people of Missouri.

These priorities did not come without some tough decisions, but as I said to you before...

If we are to deliver on meaningful priorities to the people of Missouri, tough decisions... must... be... made.

As many of you know, the Department of Corrections is faced with many challenges. AND, we will NOT shy away from these challenges.

As a former sheriff and law enforcement officer for over 22 years... I understand, firsthand, the importance of re-entry programs and alternative sentencing... We need to be more efficient in these programs so we truly offer... a second chance... AND... AS Governor, I am NOT interested in building more prisons.

In fact, we've identified a plan to consolidate the operations at Crossroads and Western Missouri facilities in Cameron, Missouri.

This decision is largely driven by our dedication to find efficiencies wherever we can in state government... and this can be done while ensuring safety... improving security... and



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delivering a MUCH needed pay raise.... ALL being done with no layoffs.

NOT only are we making tough decision within the Department of Corrections, but... our budget recommends another major change to reorganize and streamline the efforts of the departments of economic development and higher education... a plan which will make OUR government more efficient.

We have to start focusing more on the importance of OUTCOMES in state government and less on arguing over the inputs.

While this restructuring is important for the people of Missouri, I also want to be very clear that the problem is not our state workforce.

To the contrary, I have found overwhelmingly that we have a remarkable and dedicated state workforce.

But, we as elected leaders MUST do a better job clearly identifying expectations and priorities, communicating and managing responsibilities, and providing better training to promote our success.

Many of us in this chamber have programs in state government we think are important to our people, but as time goes by, Governors change... and legislators return home... and these programs grow with little oversight or accountability.

The result is an expanding bureaucracy which becomes less efficient for the people of Missouri.

Under my administration, we are going to fundamentally...

Restructure state government...

Demand greater efficiency and accountability...

AND improve our customer service to ALL Missourians.

I'll admit... this is going to take some time, but we are not going to put it off any longer... IT WILL START TODAY!

Just like families across Missouri... HAVING a responsible budget is important and a way of life.

For the first time in more than a decade, the Governor's budget does NOT plan to SPEND... EVERY... TAX ... DOLLAR.



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We have a business smart budget that saves nearly \$120 million dollars to ensure we are prepared for any unexpected expenses.

Our budget also proposes a reduction of nearly 430 government positions... all while maintaining our conservative approach to managing and streamlining government services.

In fact, our administration recently completed the state's largest deregulation effort, eliminating nearly one out of every five state regulations.

And, each of the initiatives I have laid out would not be possible without the drive, commitment, and dedication of the Cabinet because we will not be able to achieve the type of common sense conservative reforms and restructuring Missouri needs without the remarkable talent and leadership in THIS administration.

Please join me in recognizing the entire Cabinet seated in the upper gallery...

It is important to understand that being a good leader is not about being the best, but rather about your ability to make those around you better.

Every day my staff and Cabinet are committed and focused to making all of us better, pushing one another to make MISSOURI a better place.

Just weeks after I took office quick decisions had to be made on over a hundred legislative items and the 28 billion dollar state budget had to be approved.

By working together, we were able to save millions of taxpayer dollars and implement the largest tax cut in Missouri's history.

After taking the oath of office this summer, Missouri faced some tough and difficult times.

We experienced one of the worst droughts Missouri had witnessed for many years.

I called the administration together, and we reviewed our options.

To no surprise, we learned that the typical state government response was a series of requests to the federal government for assistance. We believed that was simply unacceptable for the farmers and families of Missouri.



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And instead of pushing paper... it was time for us to do more...

Through the teamwork between the Departments of Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Conservation... we put Missouri state government to work for its people and delivered meaningful relief by working together.

Again, several weeks later, we experienced tough times... when 17 individuals tragically lost their lives in the Branson incident...

It was through the efforts of both state and local officials, including nearly every state department... that Missouri was able to quickly respond, recover, and offer immediate assistance to those in dire need.

We had tough times when we lost three local law enforcement officers, and six others were shot in the line of duty.

Thankfully, by God's grace, three members of the Kansas City Police Department are with us this afternoon after being shot in the line of duty. Please welcome these officers Matt Williams, Brent Cartwright, and Michael De-Laney.

As a former sheriff, I understand what it's like to lose an officer in the line of duty, and we owe ALL these brave men and women a debt of gratitude for their dedication to public safety.

It's only a matter of time before we again face tough situations... but by faith and working together, we can ... and we will... move Missouri forward...

I was proud that we were able to come together during a special session to finish YOUR legislative priorities and pass meaningful reform to our drug courts and create opportunities for STEM education in our high schools.

These are the successes I am confident we will be able to expect this legislative session because I am also willing to acknowledge no one person or party has a monopoly on good ideas, but the best ideas are those that will serve... the people of Missouri.

A key part of our efforts to improve Missouri's workforce and infrastructure is improving our citizen's health and healthcare by developing better access to providers and hospitals.



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Almost 40 percent of Missourians live in rural areas... and, we are committed to making sure they too have access to both preventive and emergency care.

In addition, we will be providing a substantial increase to help those facing the challenges of mental health, expand tele-medicine technology, fight the opioid crisis, and better serve those in need.

I'd also like to introduce another very special guest here this afternoon, my great niece Zoey... who is one of thousands living with the challenges of Autism.

The First Lady and I are deeply committed to doing all that we can to learn more about, to promote awareness, and to advance Autism research.

That is why we are advocating for \$1 million dollars to ensure families and parents have access to the right resources and are equipped to deal with the challenges that come with caring for a loved one with Autism.

Please welcome my great niece Zoey and her family to the chamber.

And, while my focus this legislative session will be on workforce development and infrastructure...

we have already started intense planning for next session... because we must also... curb Medicaid costs, which accounts for over 10 billion dollars of the state budget, and ...

That is the reason why I hired Director Todd Richardson... to lead this charge.

Safeguarding the integrity of the Missouri Medicaid program is vital to the state of Missouri... nearly one-third of Missouri's entire budget is devoted to the Medicaid program.

It must be run with the highest level of integrity to ensure every tax dollar is accounted for.

When I began this afternoon, I said it was time to have an honest conversation.

A big part of that conversation had to revolve around all of us recognizing we can do better, and as your Governor, I am committed to trying to get better every day myself.



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I am willing to make the tough decisions that will put our state in a better position.

If we truly care about the next generation ... I am absolutely confident that by focusing on the major issues of workforce development and infrastructure... TOGETHER, we will have a successful legislative session... because, these are the issues that will benefit ALL Missourians.

In closing, I will leave you with a story about a young student that lives by these 10, 2-letter words:

“If it is to BE, it is up to ME.”

“If it is to BE, it is up to ME.”

These words have stayed with me after hearing his inspirational story. This young man had reached rock bottom and considered ending his life, but chose to overcome his obstacles and instead ... succeed in life.

When asked what motivated him, he mentioned those 10, 2 letter words ... “If it is to be, it is up to me.”

Even as someone with my share of gray hair, I have to say that is wise advice.

If the American dream is to live on ...I challenge all of us to remember those 10, 2-letters words with one change...

“If it is to BE, it is up to US!”

“If it is to BE, it is up to US!”

It is an honor and privilege to be the 57th Governor of the State of Missouri.

God bless you; God bless the great state of Missouri, and God bless the United States of America.